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ABSTRACT

The thesis of this paper is that constructivism and similar pedagogic formulations are problematic because: (1) being nondialectical they close off possibilities for dialogue about issues such as those discussed in this paper; and (2) they are embedded in forms of discourse which privilege middle-class culture, values, language, and ways of knowing without theorizing the power relations implicit in this privilege. The paper argues that, as a result, these approaches end up reproducing the status quo and counter attempts to introduce emancipatory issues into pedagogical discourse. In this paper, drawing particularly on the writings of Bernstein (1990) and Bourdieu (1977), the intent is to illustrate how this process occurs and to explore the relations between the discourse of pedagogy and the possibility of social change. As Bernstein (1990) notes, for too long educators have talked about ways of practicing pedagogy without paying any critical attention to the language and assumptions in which pedagogy is embedded. This paper does not attempt to articulate new pedagogical solutions. Rather, it is hoped that by uncovering the problems, it will contribute to the kind of dialogue that will eventually lead to a richer and more equitable form of pedagogy. Before teacher educators attend to issues of "changing our students' beliefs about pedagogy," it is essential that they devote some attention to the taken-for-granted discourse in which their own thinking and practices are embedded. (Contains 37 references.) (Author/IAH)

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The discourse of pedagogy and the possibility of social change

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Paper presented in the symposium Changing beliefs and learning to teach: Constructivist perspectives on teacher education, at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA, April 1992. Author's address: Dept. of Curriculum & Teaching, Hofstra University, Hempstead, N.Y., 11550. (516) 463 5792.

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Abstract

The thesis of my paper is that constructivism and similar pedagogic formulations are problematic because (1) being nondialectical they close off the possibilities for dialogue about issues such as those under discussion here; and (2) they are embedded in forms of discourse which privilege middle-class culture, values, language, and ways of knowing without theorizing the power relations implicit in this privilege. I will argue that, as a result, these approaches end up reproducing the status quo and counter attempts to introduce emancipatory issues into pedagogic discourse. In this paper, drawing particularly on the writings of Bernstein (1990) and Bourdieu (1977), my intention is to illustrate how this process occurs and to explore the relations between the discourse of pedagogy and the possibility of social change. As Bernstein (1990) notes, for too long we have talked about ways of practicing pedagogy without paying any critical attention to the language and assumptions in which pedagogy is embedded. It is not my goal to articulate new pedagogic solutions. Rather, I hope that by uncovering the problems I will contribute to the kind of dialogue that will eventually lead to a richer and more equitable form of pedagogy, if that is possible. To put it another way, before we attend to issues of "changing our students' beliefs about pedagogy." it is essential that we devote some attention to the taken-for-granted discourse in which *our own thinking and practices* are embedded.

In a paper presented at this conference last year (O'Loughlin, 1991) I offered a critique of forms of pedagogy that owe their origin either directly or indirectly to Piagetian theory. These approaches, often referred to as constructivist, include, in addition to fairly direct extrapolations from Piagetian theory, a variety of student-centered and developmentally appropriate pedagogies (e.g., Donaldson, 1978; Duckworth, 1987; Forman & Kuschner, 1983; Fosnot, 1989;NAEYC, 1988; Sigel,1987; Sigel & Cocking, 1977; von Glasersfeld, 1984). I argued in my paper that despite the intuitive appeal of the notion that "learners construct their understanding," constructivism is problematic because it ignores the subjectivity of the learner, and the socially and historically situated nature of knowing; it denies the collaborative and social nature of meaning-making; and it privileges technical-rational knowledge at the expense of other ways of knowing. I also argued that student-centered approaches to teaching rely on unexamined assumptions from developmental psychology, and that they take it for granted that if we create the right "active learning" conditions all children can and will "learn by doing." The central thesis of my paper was that constructivism is flawed because of its inability to come to grips with issues of language, culture and power that are an integral part of the educational context that surrounds the pedagogical interchange between teacher and students. In a revised version of that paper (O'Loughlin, in press) I went on to argue that we need to go "beyond constructivism" to a *sociocultural* notion of pedagogy which takes seriously the idea that learning is situated in sociopolitical and sociohistorical contexts and that students bring their own subjectivities and cultural perspectives to bear in constructing understanding. In addition, contrary to the facile assumption that "active learning" occurs spontaneously in "democratic," process-oriented, student-centered classrooms, I argued that differences in language usage between students and teachers, as well as inevitable imbalances in power between the two groups, make the notion of "active learning" extremely problematic - particularly for those students whose social class, culture, race, ethnicity, and/or gender differs from that of their teachers or from the dominant culture of the schools.

At that point, and indeed also in preparing the proposal for this paper,

my thinking was focused around "redefining" constructivism more inclusively to take account of the cultural and linguistic variables whose importance I was beginning to recognize. Lacking a larger framework within which to place my emergent understanding I was unwilling to let go of my belief in the power of a progressive, process-oriented, student-centered pedagogy to improve learning for all students in school, and to improve their prospects of living personally satisfying and socially empowering lives thereafter. I subscribed to the liberal view of progressive education as the primary mechanism for interrupting the reproduction of social inequities for working-class people, disabled people, women, and people of color in our society. Delpit's writings have been influential in helping me, in Bernstein's (1990) words, to think "the unthinkable," namely that, despite apparently benevolent intentions, constructivism and other progressive pedagogies actually serve to *reproduce* rather than to *interrupt* inequality in our society. In her papers Delpit (1986, 1988) takes "progressive" white educators to task for assuming that student-centered, process-oriented, indirect teaching of the type advocated by constructivists is the instructional medium of choice for all students. Delpit suggests that by mandating what is essentially a white middle-class discourse as the standard for all students, liberal educators - irrespective of the goodness of their intentions - actually promote cultural alienation and school failure among poor children and children of color while, at the same time, promoting their own class interests through advocating an education grounded in the kinds of discourse in which their own children are well versed and at which they are most likely to excel. Lemke states the problem clearly when he points out that "on the average, in society as a whole, middle- and upper-middle class students do vastly better in school than do working-class and poor families. The more a particular family raises its family 'middle-class,' regardless of its actual income or wealth, the better, on the average, they will do" (1990, p. 81). The crucial questions, as always, are the classic ones: "Who decides what is to be taught and how?" and "In whose interests are these decisions made?" The thesis of my paper is that constructivism and similar pedagogic formulations are problematic because (1) being nondialectical they close off the possibilities for dialogue about issues

such as those under discussion here; and (2) they are embedded in forms of discourse which privilege middle-class culture, values, language, and ways of knowing without theorizing the power relations implicit in this privilege. I will argue that, as a result, these approaches end up reproducing the status quo and counter attempts to introduce emancipatory issues into pedagogic discourse. In this paper my intention is to illustrate how this process occurs and to explore the relations between the discourse of pedagogy and the possibility of social change. As Bernstein (1990) notes, for too long we have talked about ways of practicing pedagogy without paying any critical attention to the language and assumptions in which pedagogy is embedded. It is not my goal to articulate new pedagogic solutions. Rather, I hope that by uncovering the problems I will contribute to the kind of dialogue that will eventually lead to a richer and more equitable form of pedagogy, if that is possible. To put it another way, before we attend to issues of "changing our students' beliefs about pedagogy." it is essential that we devote some attention to the taken-for-granted discourse in which *our own thinking and practices* are embedded.

Dialectic and the possibility of questioning "the natural"

For those of us raised in a Western world-view in which reality is taken as given and absolute truth can be determined by rational means or resort to authoritative sources of knowledge, the notion of dialectic can be difficult to comprehend. As Warren (1984) notes: "The dialectic is like a swift sparrow; we can shoot it down or put it in a cage, but we can truly understand it only while it is in flight, always a little beyond our grasp" (p. 68). Often the dialectic nature of our reality - and hence the possibilities for construing reality differently - are hidden from us by the manner in which the discourse is framed. A case in point is the Position statement on developmentally appropriate practice in the primary grades, serving 5- through 8-year olds, promulgated by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1988). In that document a dichotomy is established between a particularly punitive and

regimental form of traditional pedagogy - which is identified as developmentally inappropriate and therefore undesirable - and a humane, student-centered, developmentally appropriate pedagogy which is presented as a self-evident good. When my student teachers read this document, having already been sensitized to the folly of traditional pedagogy by reading Smith (1986) or a similar text, they find the NAEYC argument irresistible. By framing the issue in dualistic (i.e., "either-or") terms the authors effectively constrain debate to the two options presented, and since one is presented as a self-evident good, the presumption is that this one will be accepted without argument. In fact, as the discussion in my earlier papers (1991; in press) and below indicates, the NAEYC argument is highly problematic, but the authoritative mode of discourse in which it is presented masks these difficulties just as surely as multiple-choice tests in school confront students with the immutability of objective knowledge. In both cases what is denied is the sociohistorically constructed consciousness with which we make sense of our world in the dynamic process of interacting with our socially and historically constituted realities. Contrary to making simple either-or choices, Warren notes that when confronted with dualistic choices *dialectical* thinkers attempt to explore the dynamic tension between the two poles:

> In the face of dualistic tensions, no dialectical philosophy can choose for one or the other pole alone, for dialectical philosophy sacrifices nothing willingly and always wants "both." We live as well as think this ambiguity and in terms of radical praxis to forget it is to fall into the abyss of illusion and futility. (1984, p. 85).

Instead of an explanatory or descriptive theory, what is needed, Warren suggests, is a dialectical theory which embodies *both* the thesis being presented *and* its antithesis. What happens all too often, Warren points out, is that a theory (e.g., constructivism, in this case) is presented to us in language from which the possibility of negation has been eliminated. Without that negative voice the outcome is a "one-dimensional language which does not express the negative [and] is thus incapable of 'criticism' and becomes simply another tool of the existing social forces of domination predicated on the

rationalizing domination of nature" (1984, pp. 158-59). Lacking this dialectical dimension, and, as a result, lacking the capacity for self-criticism, approaches such as constructivism become dogmas to be rationalized and defended rather than invitations to dialogue and the exploration of possibility.

In addition to the dialectical properties of a theory, we can also inquire into the dialectical dimensions of the content of a theory. What view of human agency is presented? Behaviorists, for example, favoring determinism and objectivism, argue that human action is determined by the objective properties of the surrounding environment. At the other extreme, mentalists present the subjectivist argument that our understanding of reality occurs "in the head" of the individual as an isolated intellectual act. In earlier papers (1991; in press), drawing on critical work in psychology and anthropology, I argued that most constructivist approaches and the entire early childhood education movement appear to be essentially mentalist in orientation. No consideration is given to the, historical, economic, social, and cultural forces that influence how people frame events; neither is recognition given to the sociohistorical constitutedness of schooling as an arena of cultural encounter; and there is no evidence that meaning making is viewed as some kind of dialectical negotiation between these forces in the social setting of the classroom. The *dialectical* alternative is to view growth in human understanding as an exclusive product neither of objective external determinants nor of individual mental activity, but rather as a product of the dialectical interaction between persons who possess sociohistorically constructed forms of consciousness, and external realities which are also socially and historically constituted.

In, Outline of a theory of practice, Bourdieu (1977) offers a theory of cultural formation which illustrates how, through control over the kinds of discourse that are permitted, dominant groups in society can control the way dominated people view the world, and can thus create a situation in which the reality that serves the interests of the dominators is legitimated as the "natural way things are" for all persons. His analysis helps not only to explain how schooling legitimates the status quo in society, but it also offers insight into how the *nondialectical language* in which approaches such as constructivism are

couched, strives to obscure the dialectical contradictions of pedagogy and to naturalize one self-evident, unexamined, "naturally right" way to teach.

Bourdieu's account of cultural formation is anchored in the concept of *habitus*. He uses the term habitus to describe that general set of implicit values and principles that an individual picks up while growing up in a community, and which provides a set of limiting frameworks that provide the boundaries within which the person constructs understanding. Habitus contributes to social reproduction since it ensures that people in a given social community, having broadly similar experiences, will intuit, over time, the core principles and values of that community. Thus, while diversity may exist within a group, Bourdieu describes this as "diversity within homogeneity" (p. 86), since the diverse views of individuals are only a structural variant on the "class habitus" or core set of beliefs and dispositions present in that community. Bourdieu points out that this habitus is not deterministic in the sense of behavioral conditioning, but that it does suggest that people are free only within the limits specified by their sociohistorical experience: "Through the habitus, the structure which has produced it governs practice, not by the processes of mechanical determinism, but through the mediation of the orientations and limits it assigns to the habitus's operations of invention" (p. 95). Referring to pedagogy, Bourdieu points out that the events that we usually refer to as the "hidden curriculum" of schooling (e.g., apparently nit-picking rules about lining up for the bathroom, gaining permission to use a pencil sharpener, and so on, as discussed, for example, in Jackson [1968]), constitute a very powerful implicit pedagogy whose purpose is to instill a form of habitus that is so deeply held that it moves beyond the reach of consciousness to become literally *embodied* so that the reality to which we are accustomed appears "natural" to us. Bourdieu describes the power of pedagogy to gain social control through embodiment of this kind of habitus as follows:

> If all societies, and, significantly, all the "totalitarian institutions," to use Goffman's phrase, that seek to produce a new man through a process of "deculturation" and "reculturation" set such store on the seemingly most insignificant details of *dress, bearing*, physical and verbal *manners*, the

> reason is that, treating the body as a memory, they entrust to it in abbreviated and practical, i.e. mnemonic, form the fundamental principles of the arbitrary content of the culture. The principles em-bodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness and hence cannot be touched by voluntary deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit; nothing seems more ineffable, more incommunicable, more inimitable, and, therefore more precious, than the values given body, *made* body by the transubstantiations achieved by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy, capable of instilling a whole cosmology , an ethic, a metaphysic, a political philosophy, through injunctions as insignificant as "stand up straight" or "don't hold your knife in your left hand" (p. 94).

Bourdieu uses the term *doxa* to describe the way in which people who are socialized in this way come to see what is actually an arbitrary worldview as the "natural" and self-evident "way things are." Doxa exists when the world of possibility is totally closed, and reality, as it is presented, is accepted as the only possible reality. A closed cycle of reason then operates in which sense evidence from the world is seen to confirm existing reality and everything is taken for granted without question:

> Because the subjective necessity and self-evidence of the commonsense world are validated by the objective consensus on the sense of the world, what is essential *goes without saying because it comes without saying*: The tradition is silent, not least about itself as a tradition; customary law is content to enumerate specific applications of principles which remain implicit and unformulated, because unquestioned; the play of the mythico-ritual homologies constitutes a perfectly closed world, each aspect of which is, as it were, a reflection of all the others, a world which has no place for *opinion* as liberal ideology understands it. i.e. as one of the different and equally legitimate answers which can be given to an explicit question about the established political order (pp. 167-68).

Bourdieu points out that this unquestioned acceptance of reality can

only be challenged when a critique is offered which "brings the undiscussed into discussion, the unformulated into formulation" (p. 168), such that the "natural" and self-evident truth of the person's worldview is called into question. Of course, as Bourdieu points out, once such a challenge emerges, those whose interests lie in preserving current reality resort to a defensive strategy of rationalization in order to preserve the status quo. This strategy, which Bourdieu refers to as *orthodoxy*, "aims without ever entirely succeeding, at restoring the primal state of innocence of doxa" (p. 169) by means of a "a system of euphemisms of thinking and speaking the natural and social world, which rejects heretical remarks as blasphemies" (p. 169). Access to alternate forms of discourse is crucial to the exploration of alternate possibilities since, as Freire's (1970) writing makes abundantly clear, it is only when people can *name* the self-evident reality within which they live that they become free to escape from immersion in their own reality to consider other worldviews and to explore possibilities for social transformation. To prevent this the dominator expressly "delimits *the universe of possible discourse"* (p. 169) by framing the problem for the people as an either-or choice between current, self-evident reality and some other "wrong" or unacceptable alternative.

The alternative to "the official way of speaking and thinking the world," (p. 169) is *heterodoxy,* in which multiple possibilities are available for discussion and critique. Looked at dialectically, as Bourdieu notes, the universe of discourse in which ideas are subject to critique and questioning can only be defined in terms of its opposite, the universe of accepted reality, or doxa, or, as Bourdieu's says, the universe of the "unthinkable" can only be defined in opposition to what society defines for us as "thinkable." In looking at the public rationales and practices of schooling, it is important, therefore, not only to talk about the thinkable, as others define it for us, but to invite ourselves to "think the unthinkable" so that new discourse possibilities are opened up for discussion.

Looking at the larger issue of the relationship between social structures, power, and the reproduction of privilege, Bourdieu argues that for contemporary industrialized nations the reproduction of social privilege does

not generally depend on direct methods of inculcation such as those discussed above. Instead, over the years social structures have been created by those with power to ensure the automatic reproduction of their economic and cultural privileges. Once agencies of society, such as schools, embody within themselves the principles of social reproduction, those in power are saved the distasteful task of exerting power directly over others, since the manner in which social agencies such as schools operate is guaranteed to maintain the status quo. In fact, Bourdieu notes individuals and organizations possessing power often adopt quite a beneficent or philanthropic public posture, acting *as if* they favor equality, knowing all the while that the system will guarantee the maintenance of existing power relations and privileges. Bourdieu argues that schools play their part in the perpetuation of inequity by providing an environment that is privileged in favor of those who come to school already possessing *cultural capital* :

> The educational system helps to provide the dominant class with what Max Weber terms "a theodicy of its own privilege," not so much through the ideologies it produces or inculcates... but rather through the practical justification of the established order which it achieves by using the overt connection between qualifications and jobs as a smokescreen for the connection - which it *records surreptitiously*, under cover of formal equality - between the qualifications people obtain and the cultural capital they have inherited - in other words through the legitimacy it confers on the transmission of this form of heritage (p. 188).

I will now use Bernstein's recent work on the structure of pedagogic discourse to examine the relationship between schooling and the reproduction of inequality in greater detail.

Pedagogic discourse and the reproduction of social inequality

In Chapter 2 of The structuring of pedagogic discourse (1990), Bernstein focuses on pedagogy as a *cultural relay*, which can be used for either the production or reproduction of culture. He says that all pedagogic relations

consist of a relationship between transmitters and acquirers, and - however well it may be disguised - the power relationship between the two groups is inherently asymmetrical. Bernstein says that we can study the structure of pedagogy by looking at the kinds of *hierarchical rules, sequencing rules, and criterial rules,* that underlie its operation. Hierarchical rules refer to the power relations that are present, and, as Bernstein notes, these rules can be either explicit or implicit. Explicit rules lay out the hierarchical sequence of authority clearly, but, in an *implicit hierarchy*, the power is hidden in the context:

> The more implicit the hierarchy, the more difficult it is to distinguish the transmitter. We can define an implicit hierarchy as a relationship where the power is masked or hidden by devices of communication. In the case of an implicit hierarchy the teacher acts directly on the context of acquisition but indirectly on the acquirer (1990, p. 67).

Sequencing rules, too, can be either explicit or implicit. In schools with explicit sequencing rules, Bernstein explains, the competencies and skills to be attained by children of various ages are clearly stated. In such schools, Bernstein says, children have a clear sense of where they currently stand and of what lies ahead of them in the sequence. In other schools, however, the sequencing is implicit rather than explicit. Bernstein says that implicit sequencing tends to be based on assumptions from Piagetian, Freudian, Chomskyan, Ethological or Gestalt theories, all of which share the following characteristics:

> With one exception [i.e., Gestalt], all these theories are stage theories. Second, in every one of these theories the child is active in his or her own acquisition. Third, in all these theories, the acquisition of the child cannot be modified by explicit public regulation, as learning is a tacit, invisible act. Fourth, in every one of these theories the child's institutional and cultural biography is excluded. The theories are asociological. At most the child has a family. Fifth, in every one of these theories, except the ethological, the relationship between the transmitter and the acquirer or the parent and the child is such that the socializer is potentially if not actually dangerous. These theories tend to be critical of the transmitter as

> an imposer of meaning. Every one of these theories, except the ethological, replaces domination by facilitation, imposition by accommodation (p. 69).

Finally, Bernstein argues that pedagogies can differ too in the degree to which criterial rules are implicit or explicit. Criterial rules refer to the information students receive about the criteria that are used to evaluate performance. With explicit criteria, Bernstein says, the child is made explicitly aware of the criteria that are used for evaluation. When criteria are implicit, however, expectations are vaguely stated, and the student is given a lot of leeway within which to evaluate the level of his or her performance.

Having laid out these structuring rules, Bernstein goes on to distinguish between two generic types of pedagogies, the visible and the invisible. The term *visible pedagogies* refers to forms of pedagogy in which the hierarchical, sequencing and criterial rules are explicit, and in which students are graded on the external products of their learning. *Invisible pedagogies* are those in which the discursive rules "are known only to the transmitter, and in this sense, a pedagogic practice of this type is (at least initially) invisible to the acquirer" (p. 71). The focus here is on process rather than product, and on the learning accomplishments and quality of the learning experience attained by each individual. A main thesis of Bernstein's book is that all pedagogies are "cultural relays for the distribution of power" (p. 74), and consequently all embody class assumptions. Bernstein's argues that *both* visible and invisible pedagogies are intrinsically biased in favor of different segments of the middle class, and thus *both* contribute to the reproduction of inequality.

Turning first to visible pedagogy, Bernstein points out that the explicit sequencing rules, operating in lock-step fashion from an early age, make it inevitable that those who come to school poorly prepared to meet the entry requirements, will begin to fall behind from an early age. The result is that these children - often poor children and children of color - are either tracked into remedial programs, or, as Bernstein notes, and as the research reviewed by Brown et al. (1986) indicates, they are placed on an instructional regimen that focuses on decontextualized skills and isolated facts while their more

successful peers are exposed to opportunities to grasp principles and to use higher-order thinking skills. Inevitably, this leads to a widening of the gap between the two groups. Bernstein goes on to add, however, that visible pedagogy has limited benefits even for those who succeed, since this kind of pedagogic discourse is "safe rather than dangerous" (p. 76), and therefore limited opportunities exist for *any* students taught with visible pedagogy to ever "think the unthinkable." Bernstein points out that the social class bias of this approach is further exacerbated by the speed at which the "pedagogical treadmill" (Smith, 1986) moves. He suggests that "the pacing is such that time at school must be supplemented by official pedagogic time at home, and the home must provide a pedagogic context and control of the pupil to remain in that context" (p. 77). Again, since the space, time, and supervision opportunities in middle-class homes are much more likely to approximate the conditions of the official pedagogic context of schooling, children from such homes will be advantaged since the work of the school will be continued in the home. Schools of this type that deal with mixed social class populations generally address the discrepancies in background between the different groups by the simple expedient of tracking students according to their achievement and estimates of their ability. A further difficulty for students other than middle class is that schools use only middle-class discourse for all transactions. Consequently, as Bernstein says, "children of the disadvantaged classes are doubly disadvantaged" (p. 78), since they do not have opportunities at home to continue their studies in the official discourse of the school, and since, in school, their own everyday discourse is not accepted as a legitimate form of talk. Bernstein sums of the differential treatment of working-class and middle-class students under visible pedagogy as follows:

> We can now see that the pacing rule carries invisible social class assumptions which act selectively on those who can acquire the dominant pedagogic code of the school through the distributive consequences of the visible pedagogy's strong pacing and in its regulation of the deep structure of sociolinguistic competences. Indeed, where pacing is strong we may find a *lexical* pedagogic code where

> one-word answers, or short sentences, relaying individual facts/ skills/ operations may be typical of the school class of marginal/ lower working-class pupils, whereas a *syntactic* pedagogic code relaying relationships, processes, connections may be more typical of the school class of middle-class children, although even here pupil participation may be reduced (pp. 78-79).

Turning to invisible pedagogy, Bernstein begins by advancing a claim similar to Delpit's: "An invisible pedagogy... is likely to create a pedagogic code intrinsically more difficult, initially at least, for disadvantaged social groups (from the perspective of formal education) to read and control" (p. 79). Bernstein develops his explanation in terms of the assumptions of invisible pedagogy with respect to space, time and control. First, with respect to space, he points out that on economic grounds alone, it is unlikely that either schools or homes in poorer communities enjoy the luxury of having available the kind of space required for the free movement and flexible arrangements demanded by invisible pedagogy. Furthermore, Bernstein argues that even the notion of how space is used is constructed differently by members of different social and cultural communities, again posing problems if teachers attempt to extend invisible pedagogy into the home to supplement the work of school, since it is unlikely that working-class parents will be willing or able to redeploy their resources or change their space arrangements in order to set up a copy of the official pedagogy in their homes. Second, with respect to time, Bernstein points out that "invisible pedagogy presupposes a long pedagogic life" (p. 81), since it lacks mechanisms for ensuring that certain skills and competences are acquired by specific deadlines. He points out that middle-class parents who favor invisible pedagogy often favor it for the early years only, preferring to switch their children to more traditional schooling for the secondary years when academic achievement becomes a higher priority. In addition, he notes, many middle-class parents "often run a compensatory pedagogic programme dedicated to reading, writing, and counting whilst the child's creative potential may be facilitated by the invisible pedagogy of the infant school or pre-school" (p. 81). Thus, while advocates of invisible pedagogy may wish to maintain the fiction

that this approach provides "a level playing field" for children of all social classes, middle-class parents still make sure that their children are well poised to take advantage of its benefits, while providing insurance for themselves that their children will be adequately equipped with basic skills and competences. Since working-class families are less well equipped to understand these power differentials, never mind provide supplementary instruction, it requires a considerable leap of faith for them to entrust their children to classrooms in which only the invisible mode of pedagogic discourse is used, as Delpit (1992) points out so clearly. In my own experience I have found that teachers who use invisible pedagogy often give short shrift to the concerns working-class parents express about their children acquiring basic skills and passing standardized tests. Often, as Delpit notes, these *parents* seem to have greater sensitivity to the obstacles their children face than do the teachers and administrators of the progressive programs ostensibly created to emancipate these children from poverty and powerlessness.

Furthermore, echoing the arguments of Walkerdine (1984; 1988), Bernstein points out that invisible pedagogies construct the child in line with their own underlying notion of what the child ought to be. One particular facet of this has to do with the manner in which the status of the child is marked. In visible pedagogy, as noted earlier, the child's age is a key marker of status, and performance is unambiguously related to specific age-related criteria. Despite its drawbacks, at least, as Bernstein notes, under this system, the child competes only with people from the same age group. Under invisible pedagogy the situation is much more ambiguous. No clear attention is paid to age-related criteria, and the child is essentially expected to compete only with her or himself. However, as Bernstein notes, this can add unexpected burdens to young children, since performance comparisons are no longer restricted to same-age peers:

> In the case of an invisible pedagogy, because statuses are relatively more weakly marked, because of the more individualized or, better, personalized relations expected, the child, by apparently competing only with her/himself, competes with everybody. This may well be the charm of

> criteria referencing. Parents relate to the unique showings and representations. Here, the child, despite the apparent democracy of the pedagogic regime, is placed in a more competitive relation, as comparisons are less likely to be age-graded. Thus jealousies, envious feelings, aspirations are likely to be less specifically focused and so more difficult for both the parents and the child to deal with" (p. 82).

Finally, addressing the issue of control and discipline Bernstein points out that visible pedagogy, while not necessarily authoritarian, lays out clear lines of authority, along with specific rules and consequences.Since the rules are explicit, the obligations of the child are equally clear. In invisible pedagogy, however, authority is embedded in what Bernstein refers to as a "multi-layered" communication system in which the boundaries between the child's inner self and external authority are fuzzy. In order to develop self-discipline, Bernstein says, the child must be willing to lay bare much more of her or his "feelings, fantasies, fears, and aspirations," such that "The surveillance of the child is total" (p. 83). Thus, while hiding control, Bernstein suggests that this middle-class approach to discipline makes regulation pervasive in the child's life. When verbally explicit self-regulation is expected in school it is predictable that this will pose additional communication problems for children not accustomed to operating with such diffuse and self-regulative criteria and, as Bernstein says, the result is that the child "is likely to misread both the practice and its pedagogic context" (p. 84). Overall, Bernstein sums up the effects of invisible pedagogies on the child as follows:

> I have argued that the assumptions of invisible pedagogies as they inform spatial, temporal and control grids are less likely to be met in class or ethnically disadvantaged groups, and as a consequence the child is likely to misread the cultural and cognitive significance of such a classroom practice, and the teacher is likely to misread the cultural and cognitive significance of the child (p. 84).

Although the picture presented above is somewhat oversimplified, and different segments of the middle class favor different kinds of visible or invisible pedagogies, Bernstein suggests that, nevertheless, *all* of these pedagogies

function to serve the interests of the middle class, and thus to reproduce the social inequalities already present in society. Finally, I must emphasize that while the foregoing account provides an overview of Bernstein's views on the role pedagogy plays in the reproduction of social class structures, it represents but a small portion of his theoretical description of the structure of pedagogic discourse, and the reader is advised to consult the original work for information on the general theoretical context of the ideas outlined here.

The structure of pedagogic discourse: Language, culture and power

[Note: This section, which will draw upon Bakthin's analysis of speech genres and the relationship between socioculturally situated speech types and mediated action, remains to be written. However, to round out the paper and give the reader a sense of the contribution Bakhtin's work can make to an analysis of pedagogic discourse, I have included an extract from O'Loughlin (in press) which addresses this perspective. The reader should be aware that the account which follows (reproduced in smaller type to denote that it is extracted from another text) is drawn exclusively from a secondary source, namely Wertsch (1991). As I develop the argument presented her my intention is to rewrite this section based upon my own reading of Bakhtin's texts. Bakhtin's texts (including Voloshinov, 1973) are cited in the reference list for the interested reader].

In his book, Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action, Wertsch, argues that conventional psychological models examine human mental functioning "as if it exists in a cultural, institutional and historical vacuum" (1991, p. 2), and he offers as an alternative a sociocultural approach:

> The basic goal of a sociocultural approach to mind is to create an account of human mental processes that recognizes the essential relationship between these processes and their cultural, historical, and institutional settings (p.6).

Wertsch, drawing on the writings of Soviet theorists - most notably Vygotsky and Bakhtin - argues that the central link between the thinking of the person and the influence of the social, cultural,

historical, and institutional setting in which the person lives is the mediational means the person uses to engage in the construction of meaning. Although many mediational means are available, Wertsch focuses particularly on the uses of language as a crucial component in the meaning-making process. Drawing particularly on Bakhtin's writing, Wertsch argues that the means which we bring to bear in communicating and interpreting our experiences are necessarily culturally constituted because they are based on language forms that are social in origin. For Wertsch, as for Lave, the person is not seen as a decontextualized individual, contemplating the objective world in isolation and arriving at rational decisions. Instead, reasoning is conceived to be an inherently social and cultural process of meaning-making. It is social, Wertsch argues, since the development of understanding is necessarily dialogical, and requires interchange of ideas. It is culturally framed since any frames of reference we bring to bear, and any language forms we choose to use, are sociocultural in origin, and come to us burdened with their share of culturally laden significances. Meaning-making, therefore, is not viewed as an isolated mental activity but as a joint product of the person and the mediational means, operating in a particular setting:

> The most central claim I wish to pursue is that human action typically employs "mediational means" such as tools and language, and that these mediational means shape the action in essential ways... the relationship between action and mediational means is so fundamental that it is more appropriate, when referring to the agent involved, to speak of "individual(s)-acting with mediational means" than to speak simply of "individual(s)"(p. 12).

The emphasis on the critical role of language in the relationship between culture and thought is what makes Wertsch's - and Bakhtin's - theory so relevant to education. The theoretical framework that arises from this approach is suffciently comprehensive to accommodate the subjectivity of the person; the multivoiced and dialogical nature of meaning-making; the sociocultural context of schooling; the patterns of authority, power and privilege associated with various modes of discourse; and the link between the epistemological assumptions of the speech patterns used in schools and the messages we communicate to our students about their own sense of agency and their belief - or lack of belief - in the changeability of their world.

Wertsch points out, as did Lave, that this notion of the socioculturally constructed nature of meaning-making is liable to be difficult for western scholars to accept since both our everyday understanding and our intellectual concept of the role of the person in the world are bound up with notions of the individual as an autonomous, rational being. Since these notions are culturally constructed and are part of our way of seeing, the greatest challenge we face in reconstituting our pedagogy is to find a way to step outside our own cultural blinders to think of coming to know as a sociohistorically and culturally constituted dialogical process of meaning-making.

Bakhtin's sociocultural theory of meaning-making

Reading Wertsch's account of Bakhtin's theory from an educator's perspective, the essential insight to be gained is that there is a profound link between the language environment that is created in a school and the kind of epistemological messages that students receive about their meaning-making capacities and their sense of personal and social agency. Wertsch argues, for example, that true understanding can only occur when communication is multivoiced and dialogical. To the extent that only one authoritative voice is heard in the classroom, and to the extent that no opportunities are provided to interrogate that voice, students receive messages not only about the power of objective, authoritative knowledge, but they also receive messages about the lack of power they themselves hold to interpret events or construct critical understanding. Likewise critical attention needs to be paid to the forms of discourse in use in the classroom. Again, Wertsch argues, if the school privileges certain forms of technical-rational discourse and if the socioculturally situated speech forms that students bring to school are silenced or negated, then students will receive the message that their ability to come to know and act for themselves is unimportant, and that their purpose in school is to come to terms with the discourse of school and society on its terms rather than on their own. Bakhtin's sociocultural approach promises, therefore, to provide an important framework for examining the epistemological and power dimensions of schooling and for suggesting ways in which the relations between individual and society, between culture and thought, and between knowledge and power might be redefined.

There are two key concepts necessary to understanding the power of Bakhtin's approach. The first of these refers to the role of dialogicality in the construction of understanding, and the second pertains to the implications of the sociocultural situatedness of speech types for the forms of meaning-making that can occur.

Voice, multivoicedness, and dialogicality. For Bakhtin these three concepts are interdependent. The term voice, in Bakhtin's usage, refers to "the speaking personality, the speaking consciousness" (Holquist & Emerson, 1981 - cited in Wertsch, 1991, p. 51). At any given time, Bakhtin argues, a spoken utterance contains at least two voices, namely the voice of the speaker, and the consideration of the listener inherent in the speaker's communicative intention. Bakhtin referred to this implicit awareness of audience as "addressivity" and said that in its absence "the utterance does not and cannot exist" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 99 - cited in Wertsch, 1991, p. 52). Thus, even it its purest form, speech can never be reduced to simply the pure expression of inner thoughts since "utterances are inherently associated with at least two voices" (p. 53). Likewise, true understanding of another's speech can never be reduced to absorption of their words. It is necessarily dialogical since the purpose of speech is to challenge the other to produce counter images and words:

> For each word of the utterance we are in the process of understanding, we, as it were, lay down a set of our own answering words. The greater their number and weight, the deeper our understanding will be. Any true understanding is dialogic in nature. Understanding is to utterance as one line of dialogue is to the next (Voloshinov, 1973, p. 102 - cited in Wertsch, 1991, p. 54).

Bakhtin argues that this analysis applies not only to face-to-face conversations but also to text. Wertsch argues that in the traditional transmission model, text is regarded as univocal. It is regarded as having one authoritative, literal meaning, and the purpose of studying is to master that meaning. An alternative is to conceive a text as multivoiced, and therefore to see a text as providing a "semiotic space" which the student can use to generate a multiplicity of meanings:

> "In its second function a text is not a passive receptacle or bearer of some content placed in it from without, but a generator... A text is a semiotic space in which languages interact, interfere and organize themselves hierarchically" (Lotman, 1988, p.37 - cited in Wertsch, 1991, pp. 75-76).

The notion here that text - and classroom talk - be treated as "dialogic text" or as a "thinking device" (p. 77), is analogous to Freire's (1985) notion, in a chapter entitled The act of study, that the reading of text be treated as an interactive and dialogic process of engaging the author in conversation in order to develop one's critical understanding.

Creating this kind of dialogical classroom environment is often an elusive goal, as the studies by Edwards and Mercer (1987) reveal. The reason, as Bakhtin recognized, is that text - and teacher talk - varies not only on dimensions of univocality versus dialogicality, but there is also an issue of power as to whose voice has the authority to challenge the other's interpretation:

> "The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority fused to it." Instead of functioning as a generator of meaning or as a thinking device, an authoritative text "demands our unconditional allegiance", and it allows "no play with its borders, no gradual and flexible transitions, no creative stylizing variants on it" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 78 - quoting from Bakhtin, 1981 [no page number cited]).

The alternative to authoritative discourse, Wertsch says, again quoting Bakhtin, is the "internally persuasive word" which is "half-ours and half-someone else's" (p. 79). That is to say, dialogical meaning making occurs when the learner is influenced by the text, but is also allowed the space to play an active role in developing a personally constructed understanding of the author's or teacher's message through a process of dialogic interchange. As Bakhtin notes: "The semantic structure of an internally persuasive discourse is not finite, it is open; in each of the new contexts that dialogize it, this discourse is able to reveal ever new ways to mean" (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 345-46 - cited in Wertsch, 1991., p. 79). Again, the kind of dialogical interchange under

discussion here is very similar to the dialogical model underlying Freire's model of critical pedagogy, as described in Pedagogy of the oppressed (1970/ 1989). Finally, it must be noted that the power relations of teacher discourse or text are not necessarily explicit. Children internalize the power relations of schooling early on and can easily be trained to assume that all textual interpretations - and teachers' words - are authoritative, and to be accepted. Likewise, as Wertsch notes, children can internalize dialogical forms of discourse so that they engage in "hidden" dialogical thinking even if left to solve a problem on their own.

The sociocultural situatedness of speech types. Another important contribution of Bakhtin's theory is the idea that the language we use in daily communication is not monolithic. Bakhtin argues that we communicate not only in one or more national languages, but we also communicate regularly in social languages (e.g., the jargon of specific professional groups), and we use a variety of speech genres that embody the modes of expression of the cultural and subcultural groups we engage with in our society. Examples of speech genres include "military commands; everyday genres of greeting, farewell, and congratulation; salon conversations about everyday, social, aesthetic and other subjects; genres of table conversation; intimate conversations among friends; and everyday narration" (p. 60). Speech genres are not formalized languages but they are distinctive in that utterances have very specific socially agreed upon meanings. Since we all necessarily use speech that is embedded in social languages and speech genres, we necessarily appropriate the meaning and authority that accompanies the languages in which we speak. As Wertsch notes, "In Bakhtin's view, users of language 'rent' meaning" (Holquist, 1981, p. 164 - cited in Wertsch, 1991, p. 69). The implication is that we can never truly articulate a meaning that is conveyed only in our own voices - speech is inherently socioculturally constituted and multivoiced:

> The major point I want to make is that Bakhtin's approach to semiotic phenomena continually emphasized the notion that utterances and utterance meanings are inherently situated in sociocultural context. Because the production of any utterance involves the appropriation of at least one social language and speech genre, and because these social speech types are socioculturally situated, the ensuing account assumes that meaning is inextricably linked with historical, cultural, and institutional setting (Wertsch, 1991, p. 66).

The fact that all speech genres are accompanied by specific socioculturally constituted ways of seeing the world argues for the need for instruction to be more sensitive to the diverse perspectives and historically constituted voices and autobiographies our students bring to school, as the earlier discussion of Walkerdine's and Lave's work has emphasized. A truly emergent curriculum would validate the ways of knowing students bring to school by grounding the curriculum in their voices and lives. Then, as Freire (1970/ 1989) notes, through dialogue and

the sharing of perspectives, students would gradually come to see their own perspective as one of many socially, culturally and historically constituted way of knowing, and through exposure to multiple voices in text and in classroom discussion they could begin to engage other perspectives and other ways of knowing, thus enlarging their epistemological perspectives. In practice it is not this easy. Bakhtin indicates that different speech genres contain not only different sociocultural perspectives on meaning, they also vary in the degree of authority they bear. In a given situation one form of discourse may be regarded as authoritative and socially sanctioned, while other forms of discourse may be regarded as inferior or inappropriate. This power imbalance can lead to communication that privileges certain interpretations and ways of talking while marginalizing or excluding other speech genres. That is why any discussion of communication must necessarily address the issue of power relations between those who are speaking. The discourse of schooling provides a case in point.

The key question to be asked about schooling, as Wertsch notes, is "Who is doing the talking" (p. 127). Wertsch argues that in schools the "speech genre of formal instruction" takes precedence. While students come to school with a diversity of voices and socioculturally constituted perspectives, teachers, on the other hand, "have mastered a fairly uniform speech genre of formal instruction" (p. 111) and the power imbalance between teachers and students is such that teachers have authority to privilege their preferred speech genre at the expense of their students' voices.Wertsch argues that when teachers ask instructional questions rarely is it their intention to seek information or to provoke dialogue, more likely the question is "a directive designed to get the student to participate in formulating the problem in the 'right way'. By responding to the directive, the student engages in a process sanctioned and regulated by the teacher" (p. 112). Wertsch provides examples analogous to those reported in Edwards and Mercer (1987), to illustrate how teachers, when they engage students in conversation, constantly structure the dialogue so as to shift students away from their own experiential frames of reference toward thinking about issues and events in the abstract, decontextualized, technical-rational discourse that is the usual speech genre of middle-class teachers. As Wertsch notes, although conversational exchanges occur, it is not true dialogue since the teacher's authoritative voice is privileged at the expense of the student's voice:

> The negotiation of referential perspective in this case required more change on the part of the children than on the part of the teacher, something that correlates with the difference in power between the two interlocutors. The movement over the course of this segment of interaction has been one of children giving way to the teacher: they have capitulated to her use of scientific concepts as an appropriate grounding for describing objects (p. 117).

Describing the results of a survey of the frequency with which elementary school students were allowed opportunities to make observations or draw conclusion based on personal experience

Wertsch reports that such personal statements occurred with extreme infrequency. He concludes:

> In terms of the Bakhtinian question, "Who is doing the talking?" it is obvious that the first graders in the two classrooms examined by Hagstrom and Wertsch had already been extensively socialized into ventriloquating through a speech genre appropriate for that particular sociocultural setting (p. 130).

While the dominance of the teacher's voice at the expense of students' own meaning-making voices is of concern with respect to its effects on the epistemological development of all students (e.g., Barnes, 1975; Edwards & Mercer, 1987), of particular concern are the effects on students who come from other than white middle-class backgrounds. As research by Brice Heath (1983) and the commentaries by Delpit discussed earlier reveal, the speech genres which working-class children and children of color bring to school as their only interpretive frameworks are often negated. These students can experience success only if they can abandon their own sociocultural and experiential frames of reference and begin to function effectively in the abstract, decontextualized canon that is often the only speech genre available in schools. Succeeding within the formal instructional speech genre is extremely difficult, as Wertsch and Delpit both point out, since a characteristic of speech genres - as opposed to formal languages - is that they do not have clear and explicit surface markers to enable a novice to learn the rules. Wertsch concludes: "Given this difficulty, it is perhaps surprising that students are ever able to recognize, let alone master, the formal instructional speech genres grounded in decontextualized word meanings" (p. 135). Since middle-class children have exposure to similar genres of decontextualized speech in their homes, they do not experience as much difficulty in negotiating the abstract speech genres of schooling. To the extent that schooling negates the subjective, socioculturally constituted voices that students develop from their lived experience, therefore, and to the extent that teachers insist that dialogue can only occur on their terms, schooling becomes an instrument of power that serves to perpetuate the social class and racial inequities that are already characteristic of society.

Finally, Wertsch makes the point that even when students dialogue among themselves as equals the possibility of privileging still exists, since those students who have access to and make use of sophisticated technical rational vocabularies and scientific sounding explanations implicitly carry with them the authority of the speech genres they invoke. Wertsch cites examples of student discussions in science classes in which the students who could couch their explanations - however erroneous - in plausible technical vocabulary were respected for their judgments by their peers. Referring to one such student, Ian, Wertsch summarized the effect this way:

> In appropriating certain aspects of the meaning system of this speech genre, Ian appropriated certain aspects of its power. Inherent in this view of the issue is the

> assumption that power and status apply neither to the individual or the speech genre in isolation... Returning to the process of privileging, it is important to note that many of the children were persuaded by Ian's comments even though they were, in actuality, misguided and largely irrelevant to the physical phenomenon at hand. Ian's classmates had begun to believe that in formal instructional settings the speech genres of official science have some kind of explanatory power superior to their own ideas (p. 138).

Science teachers, therefore, face the simultaneous challenges of validating their students' personal ways of knowing; introducing them to the powerful speech genres of conventional science; and equipping them with an understanding of the fundamentally socioculturally constituted ways of knowing that underlie science so that the process of doing science is demystified and they do not feel compelled to defer to the intrinsically authoritative power of the received view.

Looking forward

I have no wish to write a "conclusion" for this paper since my desire is to open up the possibilities for dialogue, not present neatly wrapped solutions. I have argued that there is lack of dialectic in the form and content of much of our discourse about pedagogy. Education must ultimately be about the human condition, and about how we can enable all people to become reflective about their lives so that they might better enhance their own lives as well as contributing to improvement of the human condition. Too often, as the stark portraits of schooling presented to us by Kozol in Illiterate America (1985) and Savage inequalities (1991), and the portrait of an urban "pedagogical treadmill" reminiscent of Chaplin's *Modern Times,* presented to us by Fine in Framing dropouts (1991) reveal, schooling often perpetuates difference instead of unleashing potential. Lemke captures the social explosion that is building unless we come to grips with the possibilities of education as a producer and transformer of culture, instead of as an agent of reproduction:

> Many students do not share teachers' predominantly middle-class North European values about individual effort and achievement, acceptable levels of noise or emotional expression, punctuality, or proper dress or decorum. They resent the derogation of their values, their dialects, and

> languages, their cultural preferences. They do not believe, and with good reason, that the curriculum is designed to benefit them in life when they leave school for any destination other than a liberal arts college. They believe that school is wasting their time, keeping them off the streets and out of jobs, confining them against their will under under insulting and intolerable conditions in schools that are often ugly and physically unsafe. Most of these students would not come to school at all unless coerced, especially if they had another neutral place to meet their friends. From their point of view they are being forced to memorize useless facts, and they are told they are useless when they refuse to do so (1990, pp. 85-86).

To return to the title of this symposium, the problem is not that we need to "change teachers beliefs" - although I freely acknowledge that I once thought it was - it is, as Bernstein argues, to examine the crucial role of pedagogic discourse in mediating the relation between knowledge, power and the formation of consciousness. All to often, as I have argued, the discourse of "liberal" and "progressive" pedagogy serves to hide the powerful role pedagogy can play in either the production, the reproduction, or the transformation of culture. Since my interest is in the transformative potential of education, I have written this paper as a contribution to the dialogue that needs to take place as we examine our theoretical commitments and practices and seek a way forward.

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